



Statement by Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Head of Delegation of the Holy See, during the general discussion of Main Committee I of the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

4 August 2022

Mister/Madam Chair,

The Holy See congratulates you on your election as Chair of Main Committee I of this Tenth Review Conference and takes this opportunity to offer some general considerations at the start of the committee's discussions.

As Pope Francis notes, "international relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms."¹ The abolition of nuclear weapons is a necessary, feasible objective of which the NPT is a vital component, as discussed in the Holy See's paper *"The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: ethical dimensions and security challenges"*, presented to this Review Conference. In this regard, my delegation reaffirms that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, in complementarity with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Among the issues that warrant our urgent attention at this Review Conference, my Delegation would like to mention four. First, the war in Ukraine and the risks of nuclear use show the need for immediate action to reduce nuclear dangers. The January 2022 statement by the five nuclear-weapon States confirming the 1985 statement by Soviet Premier Gorbachev and U.S. President Reagan that a nuclear war "cannot be won, and must never be fought" was a positive restatement of commitment to the goals of the NPT.

Yet this statement contrasts with the modernization efforts undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States—which squanders resources that should instead be spent on the fight against extreme poverty. The spirit of the NPT is violated by prospects of a new arms race, made more unstable by technological developments, including hypersonic delivery vehicles and cyber technologies that can put control of nuclear weapons at risk. The apparent increase in

¹ Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the International Symposium "Prospects for a world free of nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament", 10 November 2017.

weapons under way in one State, as well as the decision by another to raise the ceiling on weapons it might acquire, are problematic. The Holy See calls on all nuclear-weapon States to develop practical policies to reduce nuclear dangers, de-escalate nuclear weapons from heightened alert status, and strengthen threat reduction measures, so that actions match rhetoric.

Second, progress on disarmament must be restored. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been ratified by nearly all countries, while a handful of States block the treaty's entry into force. Negotiations on a fissile material treaty have yet to begin. The terrible conflict in Ukraine shows the dangers of abandoning arms control agreements such as the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty, and the urgent need to advance risk reduction measures.

The entry into force of the TPNW, is a powerful testament by sixty-six States that rejects the logic of assured destruction and provides for the restorative treatment of persons and environs negatively affected by the development, testing, and use of nuclear weapons. It is the hope of my delegation that all NPT States parties can work together to further these aims, which complement the NPT.

Third, the Holy See urges a fundamental reconsideration of nuclear weapons in global security, one that reaches our very souls and does not rely on nuclear deterrence and its deadly commitment to unleash terrible destruction in response to nuclear or conventional threats against, or attacks upon, a State or its allies. There are no "legacy rights" to nuclear weapons. Moreover, our delegation calls upon nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike to fulfill their obligations under Article VI to

pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures related to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Whatever the prospects for "general and complete" disarmament, Article VI makes clear the linkage between nuclear and conventional disarmament, in particular the development of measures for strict, effective international control. This undertaking differs little from that incumbent on every Member State of the United Nations under its Charter to ensure security without national armaments.

Currently, the only legally binding instrument governing existing nuclear weapon stockpiles and delivery vehicles is the Russian-American New START Treaty, renewed in 2021, which will lapse in three years. No follow-on

negotiations are under way; neither are any involving the other nuclear-weapon States, let alone the other nuclear-weapon possessing States. The Holy See encourages the nuclear-weapon States to consider broadening their discussions to establish ceilings on their stockpiles, and to consider adoption of No-First-Use policies by all nuclear weapons states, as a step toward nuclear disarmament and de-escalation.

It is important that nuclear weapons are forbidden in outer space, but equally important to avoid conventional weaponization of that universally shared environment, which conveys such enormous benefits to mankind. These benefits include, perhaps paradoxically, monitoring arms control agreements and military forces.

Mister/Madam Chair,

Finally, advancing a world free of nuclear weapons is a moral requirement as well as a legal commitment of the NPT. In his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis stressed that the response to the nuclear threat must be collective and concerted. The work before this committee reflects that effort. In his address in Hiroshima, Japan in 2019, Pope Francis condemned the use, the threat to use, and the very possession of nuclear weapons as “immoral”. Our work here takes place within an international legal and political framework, but it is also a moral requirement, as Pope Francis notes, to safeguard our common home and build a more peaceful, integrated human community. Our delegation urges full consideration of this fundamental element at this conference.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.